DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 205 879 CG 015 371

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TITLE MBK: A Fraternity Approach to Alcohol Abuse Prevention.
PUB DATE Mar 81
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American College Personnel Association (Cincinnati, OH, March 29-April 1, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Alcohol Education; Alcoholic Beverages; College Students; *Decision Making; *Drinking; *Fraternities; Group Discussion; *Peer Groups; *Prevention; Program Descriptions; Recreational Activities; Student Behavior; Student Leadership

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the problem of college students' consumption of alcoholic beverages. A brief look at student-oriented alcohol education programs developed by university student personnel administrators is followed by a description of "My Brother's Keeper" (MBK), one fraternity's approach to alcohol abuse prevention for its 10,000 undergraduate members. The goals of the program are discussed, i.e., objectively presenting fraternity members with factual information about alcohol to allow each member to make decisions about alcohol consumption, and to integrate responsible alcohol usage into his life and chapter activities. The successful implementation of the program on several campuses is described, along with a pilot study of the program. The MBK program is described as a two-session, self-instructional program designed to facilitate discussion, to promote awareness of the alcohol issue, and to use fraternity members as facilitators. Although designed for use in a fraternity setting, MBK can be adapted for use in other settings. (Author/NRB)

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"MBK - A Fraternity Approach to Alcohol Abuse Prevention"

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"MBK - A Fraternity Approach to Alcohol Abuse Prevention"

American higher education inherited much from the universities of the Old World when Harvard, William and Mary and other early American institutions of higher education opened their doors in the 17th and 18th centuries. Virtually all facets of the collegiate experience in the early universities were modeled after the universities in England and Europe. Colleges and universities have changed considerably during the generations since Harvard first began operation.

One aspect of college life in America has not changed much since the 17th century - college student drinking. Cherrington (1924) outlined the abuses of alcoholic beverages by college students in early America. Despite efforts to stop their consumption of alcoholic beverages, college students through the years have always found ways to get alcoholic beverages for their personal use.

Deans of students or other university officials who held the responsibilities as chief student affairs officer have expressed concern over college students' abusive drinking behaviors. Students often ignored institutional guidelines regarding the consumption of alcoholic beverages or found ways around them. Efforts to control student drinking during the 1950's were usually inoperable or cumbersome and, on some campuses, were ignored by the campus administration (Bruyn, 1966).

Alcohol was temporarily given a lower priority by college administrators in the 1960's when a large percentage of college students began using other drugs in addition to alcohol. Marijuana, LSD, and other "mind-expanding" drugs became popular on college campuses (Persky, 1979, pg.15).

By the middle of the 1970's, student interest in many hard drugs had waned and alcohol again received increasing attention from university administrators. Many institutions developed new

and more appropriate ways to deal with alcohol use and abuse by college students. The programs were designed to give the students factual and objective information about alcohol to allow them to make a responsible decision regarding the use or non-use of alcoholic beverages (Persky, pg.16).

One segment of American college students has been ignored or overlooked by the alcohol abuse prevention programs on college campuses - members of social Greek letter societies, fraternities and sororities. Very little has been written for the professional journals or presented at professional meetings about alcohol education programs designed to meet the needs of Greeks. The remainder of this paper will discuss "My Brother's Keeper", one fraternity's approach to alcohol abuse prevention for it 10,000 plus undergraduate members.

Kappa Sigma Fraternity is a social fraternity which dates back to 1869 at the University of Virginia. It is not unlike most college fraternities in that nearly all fraternity functions involve the use of alcoholic beverages. In 1978, a member of the fraternity program designed to deal with the use and abuse of alcohol by the various chapters of the fraternity. Then, as now, alcohol was involved in most, if not all, chapter incidents of valdalism, destructive behavior, and hazing.

The idea for a fraternity alcohol education program was presented to the Executive Director of the fraternity and in November, 1978 an initial meeting was set up to discuss an alcohol abuse prevention program for Kappa Sigma. The program would be designed to promote responsible use of alcohol among Kappa Sigmas and would have three main goals: (1) to facilitate the total development of each member of the fraternity by articulating to him, in an objective fashion, the realities of

alcohol use and abuse and how the quality of the fraternity experience is impacted by alcohol; (2) to motivate chapter leaders to accept responsibility for the management of the chapter environment (in particular, those activities that involve the use of alcoholic beverages); and (3) to reduce the number of negative incidents resulting from irresponsible use of alcohol by providing each chapter and chapter member with the tools to affect greater responsibility for chapter usage of alcohol.

The decision was made at the November, 1978 meeting to present the new program at the 1979 biennial conclave of the fraternity. A task force was appointed to develop the program and introduce it at the conclave. The program was given the title "My Brother's Keeper" (known as MBK).

MBK was tested in a pilot study involving three of the fraternity's chapters (Denison, Auburn, Kansas). The pilot study was conducted in the 1978-79 school year prior to the conclave. The results of the program indicated that a fraternity oriented alcohol education program such as MBK would be a good program to implement at the various chapters. Following the pilot test of MBK, a few refinements were made in the format before the program was introduced at the conclave. The actual format of the program is described in a later section of this paper.

Kappa Sigma's alcohol awareness program was formally intrc-duced in August, 1979. The undergraduates at the conclave were attentive and receptive to the idea of an alcohol awareness program. Following the conclave, approximately 30 chapters (out of 184) indicated an interest in putting MBK into use for their members. The initial success of MBK did not last long, however.

Shortly after the program's introduction, it became apparent to the fraternity staff and the fraternity's alcohol awareness committee that the undergraduate members of Kappa Sigma perceived MBK as a way of telling them that they had a drinking problem. The Alcohol Awareness Committee, at a meeting in early 1980, determined that a new approach was necessary to reintroduce MBK to the fraternity's chapters. The committee determined that MBK would be reintroduced at the five regional leadership schools which were to be presented in the summer of 1980. MBK was reintroduced as a program designed to give all chapter members useful, objective information which they could use and integrate into chapter activities to improve the quality of life in the chapter and help the members to become more socially responsible individuals.

FORMAT OF "MY BROTHER'S KEEPER"

MBK is a self-instruction program designed to facilitate discussion and promote awareness of the alcohol issue as it relates to an individual chapter. The program is presented in two sessions, each approximately two hours in length, and is set up to involve all or part of the chapter membership. The sessions are educational and entertaining to increase member participation and interest in the program. MBK is presented to the chapter by a member who assumes the role of facilitator.

FACILITATOR

The person who assumes the facilitator role does not have to be an expert on the issue of alcohol use and abuse. The facilitator must commit additional time to MBK so he can study the program to understand fully its purpose and the

materials used in the program. The program materials include a facilitator's handbook, but very simply, the facilitator assists his fraternity brothers in exploring the alcohol issue as it relates to the quality of life within their respective chapter. Included in these efforts are a discussion of chapter norms for the use of alcoholic beverages and identifying mutually acceptable strategies for the chapter members to use to achieve responsible use of alcohol at chapter functions.

SESSION 1

The chapter members who are participating in MBK are first divided into small groups. Each group "competes" as a "team" in a college bowl-like "contest" during which the facilitator asks thirty-seven questions. The questions are designed to "test" the participants' knowledge of beverage alcohol - what it is and how it affects the body. After the "contest" the answers to the questions are discussed among the participants. A series of slides are shown following the discussion to illustrate what happens in the absorption process after alcohol enters the body. A series of hand-outs are given to the participants at the close of Session One for supplemental reading on alcohol use and abuse. Session Two is presented the next evening.

SESSION 2

The second session begins with the showing of the film "Booze and Yous" and a brief discussion of the film afterwards. The participants are next given handouts which contain ten statements. The statements are used in an agree/disagree exercise (similar to values clarification) and the responses are discussed among the members of the group. The final exercise of the session is an open discussion of chapter norms regarding alcohol use and abuse and brainstorming for more appropriate norms, if necessary, for responsible use of alcohol among

chapter members. At the close of the session, the participants are asked to evaluate MBK.

EVALUATION

The evaluation of MBK is certainly an important aspect of the total program as the program participants' reactions will be used by the Alcohol Awareness Committee to refine and improve the overall education effort of the fraternity. Unfortunately, at this time, the program evaluation is a problem aspect of MBK. The completed evaluations are to be sent to the Kappa Sigma Memorial Headquarters in Charlottesville but the chapter facilitators, for some unexplained reason, have not been sending in the completed evaluations with regularity. To date, evaluations have been received from five chapters, making meaningful analysis of the evaluations virtually impossible.

The evaluations which have been received are positive and encouraging to the Alcohol Awareness Committee. A small sample of the comments reads:

> "...even of it's only one less DWI ticket or one less accident we can only gain."
>
> "...made us aware of some potential problems with alcohol..."
>
> "...both informative and educational."
>
> "I learned not to drink and drive, no matter how much I drink."

Additional evaluation and analysis are needed to measure the impact of MBK. MBK has been well received by the fraternity's chapters and by student affairs administrators on those campuses where it has been introduced. The Alcohol Education Specialist at Southern Methodist University has noted that the appealing aspect of the program is that "(it) does what is says it will do and it works" (Lewis, 1981).

MBK is basically designed for use in a fraternity setting, but is does have a degree of flexability which allows it to be adapted for use in other settings.

IMPLEMENTATION OF MBK ON ONE CAMPUS

When the decision was made to reintroduce MBK to the undergraduate members of the fraternity, a decision was also made to "showcase" one chapter as it implemented the program. The Alcohol Awareness Committee was fortunate that the Alcohol Education Specialist from Southern Methodist University (SMU) had been invited to preview MBK and had participated in the committee's activities. The Alcohol Education Specialist found MBK to be a comprehensive program that is about, not against, drinking and consistent with the behavioral objectives of SMU Members of the SMU chapter of Kappa Sigma met with the Alcohol Education Specialist to work out an acceptable plan for implementing MBK. The strategies which were implemented included:

1. Awareness - faculty and staff were informed routinely of the program and the date of its implementation.

2. Interest - requests were made for positive student-oriented suggestions that would assure the chapter's acceptance of the program (i.e., choice seats at athletic events, concerts,etc.).

3. Action - a kick-off party to which key faculty staff and student leaders were invited when MBK was formally unveiled to the chapters and the campuses.

The show of support and the access to faculty and staff was effective. Actives and pledges alike learned that drinking per se is not the issue but that responsible drinking and behavior is.

"My Brother's Keeper" is not the only fraternity alcohol abuse prevention program in existence but it is the first self-instruction program designed specifically for fraternities. MBK represents Kappa Sigma's commitment to the development of an effective, on-going alcohol abuse prevention program in its chapters throughout the United States and Canada. There are approximately ten thousand undergraduate members of Kappa Sigma and it is the goal of the fraternity that their Kappa Sigma experience will enhance their collegiate lives and help prepare them to become socially responsible citizens in their communities. This is the ultimate goal which under rides "My Brother's Keeper".

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